

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 9, 2010

Mr. J. Randolph Babbitt
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20591

Ms. Margaret Gilligan
Associate Administrator for Aviation Safety
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20591

Dear Administrator Babbitt and Associate Administrator Gilligan:

We write to you today to request a meeting to review the recent National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) report on Continental Connection/Colgan Air Flight 3407 and to discuss the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) progress in implementing these overdue reforms to aviation safety.

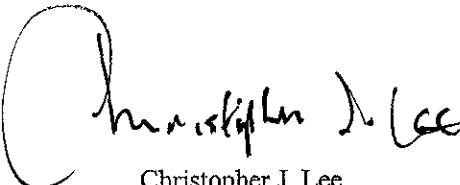
The NTSB concluded that the probable cause of the crash was the crew's "inappropriate response to the activation of the stick shaker, which led to an aerodynamic stall from which the airplane did not recover." Contributing factors include the crew's failure to monitor airspeed or maintain a sterile cockpit, in addition to the regional air carrier's "inadequate procedures for airspeed selection and management during approaches in icing conditions." The Board further concluded that the "pilots' performance was likely impaired because of fatigue." Fifty people lost their lives in the February 12, 2009 crash in Clarence Center, New York.


The NTSB issued 25 new air safety recommendations to the FAA and renewed its request for action on three previously-issued recommendations, one of which was filed nearly seven years ago. These recommendations, the result of a pain-staking investigative and analytical process, deserve immediate and serious consideration by the FAA. We also note that 18 of the 25 new recommendations are encapsulated in whole or part in H.R. 3371, the Air Safety and Pilot Training Improvement Act, which passed the House by an overwhelming bipartisan margin in October.


In our previous correspondence, you stated your Aviation Rulemaking Committee "did not have a recommendation to address (pilot) commuting," one of the likely contributing factors of the Flight 3407 crash. While we recognize this particular issue requires additional time to address, this should not hinder action on other items such as deficiencies in pilot training and rest requirements, which have been studied and cited for decades in a large number of airline crashes. The NTSB has listed pilot fatigue on its "Most Wanted List" of safety improvements since the list's inception in 1990. We share the frustration of many that prior NTSB recommendations have fallen on deaf ears, been delayed or otherwise not given sufficient attention.

The factors that led to the crash of Flight 3407 – including but not limited to crew training and experience, pilot fatigue and regional air carrier practices – have been clearly identified, and each day they are not addressed is another day the flying public is put at unnecessary risk. We appreciate your willingness to work with us on these important air safety reforms, and we look forward to meeting with you to ensure these recommendations are considered and quickly implemented.

Sincerely,


Christopher J. Lee
Member of Congress


Louise Slaughter
Member of Congress


Brian Higgins
Member of Congress